

# ICE AGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

## Analysis of Alternative and Environmental Assessment

Waupaca and Portage Counties, Wisconsin

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Continental glaciation was important in the formation and modification of physical surface features, including lakes, hills, and ridges in many areas of the Northern hemisphere. About a million years ago a tremendous ice sheet started forming in the Labrador and Hudson Bay Regions of Canada. There were four major ice advances and retreats--the Nebraskan, Kansan, Illinoian, and Wisconsinan stages of the Ice Age. The most recent episode of continental glaciation in North America, known as the Wisconsinan stage, ended 10,000 years ago. Wisconsin contains examples of many landforms that are world renowned evidence of past glaciation. These include moraines, eskers, kames, kettles, drumlins, wetlands, and lakes.

Wisconsin's efforts to preserve its Ice Age features began in the 1950's. A proposal for the establishment of a National Park showcasing Wisconsin's glacial features was formulated in the 1950's through the efforts of the late Raymond T. Zillmer, a Milwaukee attorney. In 1958, he and others formed the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation to work for the establishment of an "Ice Age Glacier National Forest Park." The result of this effort was the authorization by Congress in 1964 of an Ice Age National Scientific Reserve. Each unit of this reserve protects nationally significant glacial features. There are nine units of the reserve: Two Creeks Buried Forest, Horicon Marsh, Kettle Moraine, Campbellsport Drumlins, Cross Plains, Devil's Lake, Mill Bluff, Chippewa Moraine, and Interstate.

The purpose of the Ice Age NST, as a companion project to the Reserve, includes preserving some of the finest features of Wisconsin's glacial landscape, as well as other scenic and natural resources, while providing opportunities for low impact recreational and educational use. In addition the trail connects six of the nine units of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve, and many other federal, state, county, and local parks. The National Park Service (NPS), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), private citizen volunteers of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF), counties, local governments, and other private organizations are working to help build and maintain the Ice Age NST.

In October 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the Ice Age NST as a component of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1241 et seq.). It is one of only eight trails authorized by Congress to be a NST. Patterned after the renowned Appalachian Trail, NSTs are long distance, non-motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas.

In many ways, the Ice Age NST is similar in concept to the Appalachian NST. In other ways, it is uniquely different as it takes the visitor through a glacial landscape and promotes, through interpretation, better understanding of the characteristics and formation of this landscape rather than following a mountain range. The Appalachian NST traverses many states whereas the Ice Age NST showcases the glacial features of Wisconsin. When completed, the trail will extend over 1,000 miles from Interstate State Park on the St. Croix River in Polk County to Potawatomi State Park in Door County (Map 1), tracing features left by the last continental glacier that swept over Wisconsin. Statewide, over 225 miles of the trail are currently in place and certified as meeting the standards of a NST. Another 250 miles are walkable but not yet certified.

The NPS is responsible for overall administration of the Ice Age NST. In 1983, the NPS completed a **Comprehensive Management Plan** for the trail. The plan provides overall guidance for development and management of the trail, which is intended to be a partnership venture, accomplished through many cooperating Federal, State, and local agencies and private trail organizations. The primary cooperators are the WDNR and the IAPTF. A written agreement between these parties outlines their respective roles and responsibilities for the acquisition, development, operation, maintenance, and protection of the trail.

More than 130 miles of trail are located on WDNR properties. The WDNR assists in planning and implementing the Ice Age NST, provides grants to the IAPTF and others for acquisition and maintenance of the trail, and acquires and accepts gifts of land for the trail.

The IAPTF acquires lands for the trail, or arranges for temporary routing of the trail, develops and maintains the trail and its associated lands, raises money to support the trail, and generally promotes and sponsors the trail.

The Waupaca/Portage County portion of the trail will be on uplands and lowlands, and will at times follow the highest ridges of the Elderon Moraine on the border of Waupaca/Portage Counties. Approximately 20 miles of trail currently exist between the two counties. The balance of the route has not been developed. The purpose of the plan is to identify a specific corridor within which a permanent trail can be established, and thereby guide agencies and private volunteer organizations in their efforts to secure a route for the trail.

The NPS, WDNR, IAPTF, and Waupaca and Portage Counties propose to adopt a planned and mapped "corridor of opportunity" within which lands for the trail may be acquired, developed, managed, and protected for the Waupaca/Portage Counties portion of the Ice Age NST. Approval of the preferred alternative would permit the WDNR to provide Stewardship

grants to others for acquisition of lands for the trail, accept gifts of lands for permanent dedication for Ice Age NST purposes, and acquire lands for Ice Age NST purposes within the corridor.

The trail will be primarily used as a hiking trail. Motorized uses and horses will not be permitted. Other uses will include bird watching, interpretive walks, education and limited ungroomed cross country skiing on those segments of trail that are designed and constructed for such use.

The specific location of the proposed project is as follows:

Counties: Waupaca and Portage

Towns: Alban, Iola, New Hope, Scandinavia, Amherst, Farmington,  
Lanark, Dayton, Belmont

T25N R10E Sections 1, 2, 11-15, 22-27, 34-36

T24N R10E Sections 1-3, 10, 11, 13, 14, 22-25

T24N R11E Sections 18, 19, 29-32

T23N R11E Sections 6, 7, 17-20, 29-33

T23N R10E Sections 1, 2, 11-13, 24, 25, 36

T22N R11E Sections 2-11, 18-20, 29-32

T22N R10E Sections 1, 12, 13, 36

T21N R11N Sections 5-7

T21N R10E Sections 1, 10-14, 22-28, 32-34

A decision on this proposal will not influence future decisions on the Ice Age NST. Each county's segment of trail will be developed as funds and approvals are acquired. The goal, however, is a continuous completed trail.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Biodiversity:** Biodiversity is the variety and variability among living organisms and the ecological system in which they occur on the local and regional landscape.

**Corridor of Opportunity:** A planned and mapped linear space, generally about 1/2- to 1-mile wide, but wider in some places to protect exceptional features, within which the cooperating partners are working to establish the "Trail" and a suitable "Trailway". The "Corridor" has different implications for each primary partner:

To the WDNR, it represents the area within which it may (1) make Stewardship Fund grants for acquisition of "Trailway" lands, (2) accept gifts of lands for dedication for the Ice Age State Scenic Trail, and (3) acquire lands for the trailway.

To the NPS, it represents the area within which it will exercise its authorities to

establish, protect, and manage the Ice Age NST. It is an area that has been taken through a public planning process and has met Federal environmental and cultural compliance requirements. The lines defining the corridor will be treated as the "park" boundary for the trail and the limits within which Federal land acquisition authority for the trail would be exercised to create a suitable "Trailway", should that authority be legislatively given. It also represents the area which will be considered in other planning documents such as resource management plans and land protection plans.

To the IAPTF, it represents the area within which it will seek to protect or have protected a suitable "Trailway" for the Ice Age NST in order to preserve significant glacial features, provide an outstanding trail use experience, and manage on a sustainable basis the resources of the "Trailway". Also see Trail and Trailway.

Rarely will the entire width of the corridor be acquired or protected for the trail, unless it contains outstanding glacial features. The reason the corridor is wider than the trailway that will be acquired is to provide the opportunity to be flexible in working with willing landowners on a voluntary basis.

Dedication: As provided for in Wis. Stats. 23.293, the transfer of land or a permanent interest in the land to the State of Wisconsin (for Ice Age NST purposes), and a binding unilateral declaration by the State that the land rights under the ownership of the State will be held in trust for the people by the WDNR in a manner which ensures the stewardship of the area. See also "Match-Grant Program."

Drumlins: Elliptical or elongate hills formed by erosion and deposition of material beneath thick glacial ice and streamlined in the direction of ice flow.

Endangered Species: A species on the Federal or Wisconsin Endangered Species list and whose continued existence as a viable component of the State's wild animals or wild plants is determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the WDNR to be in jeopardy on the basis of scientific evidence.

Esker: A long, narrow ridge of coarse and fine gravel and/or sand deposited by a stream flowing in an ice-walled valley or tunnel beneath glacial ice.

Exurban: Pockets of residential development lying beyond the suburbs of a city, typically composed of upscale homes.

Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF): The Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation is a non-profit Wisconsin Corporation whose mission is to cooperate with the NPS and the WDNR to preserve Wisconsin's glacial heritage for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations by creating, supporting, and protecting a continuous 1,000-mile system of parks and trails tracing the Ice Age formations across Wisconsin.

**Interlobate Moraine:** Unsorted material ranging in size from sand to boulders deposited at the junction between the opposing movements of two lobes of a glacier.

**Kame:** A steep-sided, usually conical-shaped hill formed of sorted sand or gravel, deposited by meltwater against the edge, or at the bottom of a funnel shaped shaft, in a stagnant glacier.

**Kettle:** A depression formed by the melting of buried glacial ice. Some kettle holes hold water.

**Match-Grant Program:** Wis. Stats. 23.293 established a procedure whereby the WDNR may accept gifts of land for Ice Age NST purposes, and may permanently dedicate them for that purpose. Dedication of such lands releases into a separate account, dollars equal to the appraised value of those lands. The accrued funds in that "match-grant account" are to then be used by the Department to help acquire additional lands for the Ice Age NST.

**National Park Service (NPS):** The agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior responsible for preserving, protecting, and managing the natural, cultural, and recreational areas of the National Park System. The mission of the NPS includes two primary goals: to preserve our natural and cultural resources and to provide for public use and enjoyment of these resources in ways that will leave them unimpaired for future generations. The NPS is responsible at the Federal level for carrying out the provisions of the National Trails System Act as they relate to the Ice Age NST by coordinating, guiding, and assisting the efforts of others to acquire, develop, operate, protect, and maintain the trail. The 1983 comprehensive plan prepared by the NPS identifies the DNR and the IAPTF as the primary cooperators in the long-term effort to develop and manage the trail.

**Special Concern Species:** Species about which a problem of abundance or distribution is suspected but not yet proven scientifically. This State classification focuses attention on species before they become threatened or endangered.

**Stewardship Fund:** A Wisconsin legislatively established fund administered by the WDNR, which provides funding for conservation and recreation programs, including matching grants to not-for-profit conservation organizations for certain projects. The Ice Age NST is one of the qualifying projects, and may receive up to \$500,000 annually in land acquisition and for grants for land acquisition.

**Threatened Species:** A species on the Federal or Wisconsin Threatened Species list is one which appears likely, within the foreseeable future, on the basis of scientific evidence, to become endangered.

**Trail:** The usable tread and immediate surrounding space that is maintained for the purpose of passage along the trail route. For walking only segments, this may be an 18- to 24-inch wide tread and an additional 2 feet of cleared space on either side. For segments where

other activities are also allowed, these measurements would likely be greater. Also see Corridor of Opportunity and Trailway.

**Trailway:** The width or area of land that is managed for the purposes of the Ice Age NST. It includes the "Trail" and surrounding lands that are owned, leased, held by easement, or in some way controlled for management as part of the Ice Age NST. It most often is the land that the IAPTF has secured for the Ice Age NST, frequently with Stewardship Fund grants. These secured rights may be held by the foundation or may have been given to the WDNR. Where the trail passes through existing public ownership or management areas, the "Trailway" is the width or area of land that the managing agency has committed to management for the trail. Also see Corridor of Opportunity and Trail.

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR):** The state agency responsible for implementing State and Federal laws that protect and enhance Wisconsin's natural resources--its air, land, water, wildlife, fish, and plants. It coordinates the many State-administered programs that protect the environment and provides a full range of outdoor recreational opportunities for Wisconsin residents and visitors.